

A Century After Queen's Overthrow, Talk of Sovereignty Shakes Hawaii

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HONOLULU — A century after United States marines overthrew the Kingdom of Hawaii, an emotional movement is sweeping the Hawaiian Islands to restore a measure of sovereignty to the native Hawaiian people, the Kanaka Maoli, the only indigenous people in America still not recognized by the Federal Government.

The movement is building momentum with the approach of Jan. 17, the 100th anniversary of the date that 162 marines illegally deposed Queen Liliuokalani, starting the complex events that led to the Hawaii's annexation by the United States.

While only a handful here are demanding independence or restoration of the monarchy, there is widespread agreement that something must be done soon to right that wrong. The pressures are taken with utmost seriousness by Hawaii's political and business establishment, fearful of disruptions in the state's \$9 billion tourism industry.

Talking About the Unthinkable

"We are talking about issues we dared not discuss 10 years ago," Gov. John D. Waihee 3d, a Democrat who is Hawaii's first governor of native Hawaiian extraction, said in an interview. "We are talking about recognition that an illegal action took place, and the idea that native Hawaiians have a right to self-determination."

Mr. Waihee said he preferred a solution that was "inclusive" of all the many ethnic groups that make up the polyglot island state.

Perhaps the most important leader of this movement is Milliani Trask, a Hilo lawyer. "For many years sovereignty was considered the preoccupation of a handful of activists who were not political realists," she said. "But now every politician running for office is meeting with sovereignty leaders."

Ms. Trask leads Kalahui Hawaii, or Hawaiian Nation, a group that has drawn up a constitution and enrolled 12,000 members seeking Federal recognition similar to Indian tribes.

Major hotels like the Sheraton-Waikiki, Kiwanis clubs and other groups have requested briefings from native Hawaiian leaders. Militant groups have staged public rallies in Waikiki, the main tourist area. On June 11, the Honolulu police arrested 32 demonstra-

tors at the Iolani Palace, the queen's former residence, among them Bumpy Kanehela, a 310-pound tattooed ex-convict who has become something of a folk hero among those seeking independence.

One Direction, Many Canoes

Native Hawaiians are asking some pointed questions: Why have they allowed their proud culture to be prostituted into commercial luaus for tourists and their ancestral lands, their aina, converted into golf courses for wealthy Japanese? Why are they the poorest, least educated and unhealthiest of Hawaiians?

But they are deeply divided over sovereignty, all paddling in the same direction but in different canoes. The most militant and angry demand com-

The islands rumble with ethnic pride and pent-up anger.

plete independence and "decolonization" of Hawaii, once recognized by Britain, France and the United States as a sovereign nation. The more numerous moderate voices call for a "nation within a nation" akin to the status accorded Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts, as well as restoration of the "home lands" owed them under 1921 Federal legislation.

After spurning their heritage for years, Hawaiians with only a few drops of native blood are suddenly finding their roots in the land, music, hula and spirituality. "Even the most conservative elements are feeling this movement," said Dawn Luahiwa Farm-Ramsey, president of the Hawaiian Civil Political Action Committee, a middle-of-the-road group.

'Dance the Hula'

Some 40 Hawaiian groups have joined under the umbrella of Hui Na'auao, an organization formed last year to educate Hawaiians about sovereignty. The group, which has a \$1 million grant from the Federal Administration for Native Americans, takes

no position on what form sovereignty should take, but its leadership is determined to bring change.

"The wrong people are making the decisions," said its president, Elizabeth Pa Martin, a Honolulu lawyer. "Hawaiian and American values are in conflict. They exploit us, use us. We are supposed to dance the hula for everybody and smile."

These stirrings are causing unease among non-Hawaiian residents, who include many recent retired migrants from the United States mainland and immigrants from Asia. Such fears are well grounded if Kawehi Kaunui Gill, a leader of the independence forces, gets her way.

"The natives are getting restless," said Ms. Gill, a candidate for trustee of the state's Office of Hawaiian Affairs. "Well, this is our land. These islands are too small. We're already overpopulated. Half of the people got to go, and it ain't going to be us."

Some Mundane Worries

But full independence has little support among most other native Hawaiians, especially the middle class, who worry about losing their Social Security, Medicaid and other benefits. Native Hawaiians make up about 200,000, or less than 20 percent, of the state's population of 1.2 million. But years of intermarriage with Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Caucasian and other immigrants means that most of those native Hawaiians can claim only a quarter or less Hawaiian blood, and almost every family has strong ties to other ethnic groups.

For now, the majority oppose secession. "We cannot alienate other nationalities — we must take an approach that is sensible," said Mahealani Pai, a 34-year-old Kona man who is three-quarters Hawaiian.

Considerable support has gone to Ms. Trask's group, Kalahui Hawaii, a kind of nation within a nation. It has drawn up a constitution that has a bill of rights and vests power in a governor, a unicameral elected legislature (the Pakaukau) and a judiciary system made up of elected judges and an elders council. The nation would be rooted in the 200,000 acres of Hawaiian home lands and 1.2 million acres of "ceded" lands, original Hawaiian lands ceded to the state by the Federal Government upon statehood in 1959.

The goal, Ms. Trask said, is economic self-sufficiency, not secession. "Ev-



The only indigenous people in America still not recognized by the Federal Government are the Kanaka Maoli of Hawaii. Native Hawaiians are

now calling for recognition, from independence to a nation within a nation. In Honolulu, Edwina Talkington rallied, blowing a pu-pu, a Hawaiian conch.

ery Hawaiian in his heart would like to be independent," she said. "But we owe it to our people to be realists. There is no mechanism for seceding from the union. Secession doesn't do anything for the native people."

Some Ignore Washington

But others refuse to recognize Washington's authority at all. The chief theoretician of this view is Hayden F. Burgess, a lawyer who runs the Institute for the Advancement of Hawaiian Affairs out of a tiny cabin in a weed patch behind his familial home in Wainane on Oahu, about 30 miles from the glitter of Waikiki. He has assumed a Hawaiian name, Poka Laenui.

He argues that the United States violated the self-determination provisions of the 1946 United Nations Charter when it made Hawaii a state in 1959 without offering the option of independence. He tries to establish ties to international bodies, like the World Council of Indigenous Peoples.

"I am talking about getting the Americans out of Hawaii," Mr. Burgess said, adding that he would not expel anybody as long as they are "willing to disavow loyalty to the U.S."

Japan or wherever they came from." Another proponent of independence is Dr. Kekuni Blaisdell, a 67-year-old internist who is a professor of medicine at the University of Hawaii. His grandmothers were servants to the deposed queen. He is coordinator of Ka Pakaukau, a group of 12 organizations seeking independence.

He supports the "nation-within-a-nation" concept, but only as an "initial step" toward independence. But he added that this should come through direct negotiations between the President and "representatives of our nation as co-equals."

"We refuse to accept a subservient position even temporarily," said Dr. Blaisdell, who is planning a "tribunal" to try the United States for alleged crimes in Hawaii.

The closest thing to self-governance the Hawaiians now have is the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, a semi-autonomous state agency created in 1978 to provide services to native Hawaiians and serve as the receptacle for any reparations won from either state or Federal Governments.

"In the minds of some people, sover-

eignty is a scary idea, but it is being more accepted," said the chairman of the nine elected trustees, Clayton H.W. Hee. "I do not subscribe to secession, but no doubt some form of sovereignty should be re-established in Hawaii."

The office recently offered three proposed bills to Hawaii's powerful senior Senator, Daniel K. Inouye, a Democrat. They would have Washington restore the ceded lands and pay \$10 billion in reparations. According to Patricia M. Zell, staff director of the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs, which Mr. Inouye heads, the Senator "strongly supports" the sovereignty movement but would not act until native Hawaiians reach some consensus. For now, Mr. Inouye has drafted only a bill setting up the mechanism by which Hawaiians might be accorded recognition, a bill dismissed as useless by Ms. Trask.

The election of Bill Clinton as President gives the movement a big boost. The Democratic platform supported sovereignty, while the Bush Administration has resisted it on the legal ground that, unlike Indians, Hawaiians have had no self-governance since annexation by the United States.